

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 06228 071504Z

51

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 OC-05 CCO-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07 AID-05 COME-00

TRSE-00 OMB-01 CIEP-01 FRB-03 /086 W

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R 032230Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9526

INO RUESBG/AMCONSUL CALI 967

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 6228

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CO

SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. IN CONTRAST TO THE TONE AND SUBSTANCE OF THE SCATTERING OF NEWS STORIES ON THE SUBJECT THAT APPEARED IN THE U.S. PRESS, BOGOTANOS WENT ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS AS USUAL DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF COLOMBIA'S MOST RECENT STATE OF SIEGE. COLOMBIANS WHO, FOR MOST OF THE PAST TWO DECADES, HAVE LIVED UNDER STATE OF SIEGE CONDITIONS, VIEWED THE JUNE 26 DECLARATION BY PRESIDENT LOPEZ AS ESSENTIALLY A LEGAL MANEUVER THAT WILL HAVE DIRECT BEARING ON ONLY A VERY FEW PERSONS, SUCH AS GUERRILLAS AND CERTAIN TYPES OF CRIMINALS, AS WELL AS ON MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WHOSE COMPENSATION IS SOMEWHAT INCREASED BY A STATE OF SIEGE. THE TIMING OF THE LOPEZ MOVE, WHICH HAD BEEN SURPRISING TO MANY OBSERVERS--THE GOC APPEARED TO HAVE PUT BEHIND ITSELF THE WORST OF THE CIVIC DISORDERS--APPEARED SOMEWHAT MORE LOGICAL WHEN VIEWED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DECISION OF THE CONSULTING GROUP OF THE WORLD BANK, A DECISION NOT REACHED UNTIL JUNE 24, TO ROLL OVER THE COLOMBIAN DEBT. AS NOTED BELOW, FINANCE MINISTER BOTERO, LATE IN THE WEEK, ISSUED SOME OPTIMISTIC, BUT HARDLY COMFORTING PROJECTIONS ON THE COLOMBIAN INFLATION RATE. AS THE WEEK DREW TO A CLOSE, THE

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PAGE 02 BOGOTA 06228 071504Z

MOST HISPANIC AND TRADITIONAL OF LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES TOOK

DUE NOTE OF THE RATIFICATION BY THE HOLY SEE OF THE SOMEWHAT MORE MODERN CHURCH STATE CONCORDAT THAT THE TWO PARTIES HAD SIGNED TWO YEARS EARLIER. AS IF IN A SHOW OF CELESTIAL DISAPPROVAL, THE GREY SKIES OF BOGOTA CLOSED OVER, BLOTTING THE SUN FROM ALL BUT SPASMODIC VIEW. END SUMMARY.

2. "THE WORST OF THE CURRENT ECONOMIC RECESSION IS OVER" DECLARED THE MINISTER OF THE TREASURY, RODRIGO BOTERO, IN AN EL TIEMPO ARTICLE ON 7/3/75 ANNOUNCING THAT THE JUNE 1975 INCREASE IN THE NATIONAL COST OF LIVING (COL) AVERAGED LESS THAN ONE PERCENT IN COMPAIRSON WITH THE 1.15 PERCENT INCREASE IN JUNE 1974, FOR A TOTAL INCREASE THUS FAR IN 1975 OF 13.5 PERCENT. MOREOVER, THE MINISTER POINTED OUT THAT IF THE JUNE 1975 MONTHLY RATE OF INCREASE IS NOT EXCEEDED DURING THE REMAINDER OF THE YEAR, THE COL FOR 1975 WILL AVERAGE APPROXIMATELY 20 PERCENT, VIS A VIS THE 26 PERCENT INCREASE IN 1974.

3. LLERAS PICKS UP SPEED. THE POLITICAL ARENA IN COLOMBIA WAS DOMINATED BY EX-PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO DURING THE PAST WEEK. HIS RECENTLY ORGANIZED SEPARATIST GROUP WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY (BOGOTA 5998), THE "LIBERAL DEMOCRATIZATION MOVEMENT" (MDL), BECAME MORE FORMALIZED WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CREATION OF AN EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND DEPARTMENTAL OFFICES. CRTICIS, ESPECIALLY SUPPORTERS OF LLERAS ARCHRIVAL, JULIO CESAR TURBAY ALAYA, HAVE SCORED LLERAS MOVES AS DIVISIVE AND THE EDITORIAL REACTIONS OF BOGOTA'S MAJOR LIBERAL NEWSPAPERS, EL TIEMPO AND EL ESPECTADOR, NORMALLY PRO-LLERAS, HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT COOL. LLERAS MAINTAINS THAT HIS MOVEMENT WILL NOT DIVIDE BUT REVITALIZE THE PARTY THROUGH GREATER PARTICIPATION BY THE LIBERAL MASSES. BENEATH THE RHETORIC, HOWEVER, LLERAS IS WORKING HARD TO HAVE HIS SUPPORTERS ELECTED TO CONGRESS NEXT YEAR, REDUCE TURBAY'S CONTROL OF THE PARTY, AND CLEAR THE WAY FOR HIS OWN BID FOR POWER IN 1978. MEANWHILE, PRESIDENT LOPEZ HAS GENERALLY REMAINED SILENT ON THE ISSUE, PROCLAIMING ONLY THAT MOVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES LIKE THOSE OF LLERAS ARE PROOF OF THE VITALITY OF THE LIBERAL PARTY AND DO NOT AFFECT THE GOVERNMENT.

4. MAINTAINING HIS MOMENTUM, LLERAS ALSO CONTINUES TO PROMOTE HIS PROPOSED ELECTION REFORMS (BOGOTA 5998). DESPITE OPOSITION OF

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PAGE 03 BOGOTA 06228 071504Z

MANY CONGRESSMEN, HE CONVINCED THE LIBERAL PARTY DIRECTORATE TO PRESENT THE PROPOSALS TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE OTHER PARTIES FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION AND HE HAS CAREFULLY TIMED FURTHER EXPLANATIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS TO KEEP THE PROPOSED REFORMS IN THE PRESS.

5. SO FAR, TURBAY HAS REMAINED AT HIS AMBASSADORIAL POST IN WASHINGTON AND FOR THE TIME BEING HAS LEFT THE DEFESNE OF HIS POLITICAL FORTUNES TO HIS LIEUTENANTS.

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